

**Town of Arlington
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

Wednesday, October 16, 2002 7:15 PM

Committee members present: Rich Bento, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Larry Englisher, Alan McClennen, Lt. Jim McHugh, Scott Smith, Ed Starr, David Walkinshaw

Others present: Dave Barker (MBTA) and approximately 10 residents, including Chris Leich, Kurt Fischer, Lucretia Rodda, Stephen Makowka, Ed Cuoco, Colin Blair, Judy Berman, Doris Powell, Elizabeth Nolan

Administrative Items

The minutes of 9/18 were approved unanimously.

Pleasant Street

Ed Cuoco made a presentation on Pleasant Street. He noted that about 50 families were on the mailing list for the group, thus far. Major concerns are as follows:

- Creating accessible crosswalks for residents, especially children and the elderly
- Safety at all hours, with a focus on current accident hot spots
- Reducing through-trucking, especially during off peak hours
- Balancing Pleasant Street's role as an important traffic mover with its residential and historical ambience

Specific discussion focused on crosswalks, the curve at Monadnock/Gray, and truck traffic.

There are only three crosswalks, and it is difficult to cross when traffic is flowing. They are hard to see, especially at night. There is a school bus stop at Kensington, where an uncontrolled crosswalk is the only way to cross. Proposals include pedestrian warning signs, as well as better markings, side bollards, and in-pavement systems.

Ed Cuoco reported that there have been 5 crashes within the past three years within 100 feet of the Gray Street intersection. He notes that the 25 mph speed limit is ignored, and proposes:

- Consistent speed signage
- A speed-actuated sign
- Increased regular speed enforcement during the night
- Consistent reflectors on all telephone poles

Finally, on the topic of excessive truck traffic, Ed Cuoco noted that Pleasant Street carries a substantial volume of thru traffic day and night. Concerns include noise and risk of crashes, especially with trucks speeding at night. Proposals include an official count/analysis, increased speed enforcement (especially at night), and involvement with regional planning efforts.

Alan McClennen responded with the following points:

- The street is zoned residential (although it is an arterial, and not a local street)
- Cambridge has not implemented a truck ban; rather, Cambridge City Council is just beginning the process of implementing the recommendation in the regional truck study. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has lapsed on the regional truck study.

- In 1983, petitions were made to the Commonwealth for truck bans on Lake, Pleasant and Park Streets. The Lake Street ban passed in 1985; the others did not.
- There is data from 1986 when Pleasant Street was rebuilt. The end result of the Arlington Center changes in 1989 – 1990 was to make it harder to use Route 60, with an end result of more traffic congestion, but probably less volume.
- Few physical changes can be made on the route.

Ed Cuoco noted that traffic has increased significantly in the past 20 years. Larry Englisher asked if we could obtain data on truck usage. Jim McHugh responded that the counters could be set up to do a rough classification count, and Alan McClennen noted that the truck percentages in the Regional Truck Study were derived using percentages of total traffic...a questionable assumption.

There was general agreement that visibility enhancements to the crosswalks (such as pedestrian warning signs) are needed; and that further investigation of truck traffic was needed. Perhaps some truck counts along Pleasant Street and at the Route 3/ Route 60 split just north of Arlington Center would be appropriate. Scott Smith noted that there might be a common interest with Medford residents in this issue, given that Route 60 also passes through a densely populated residential neighborhood in Medford.

Ed Starr then solicited comments from residents:

- The heavy cross-town traffic may be one unintended consequence of the cancellation of the Inner Belt, back in the 60s.
- Crosswalk with a bollard at Kensington is needed
- Can't sleep at night due to the noise. Budweiser trucks going towards route 2 at about 7 AM

Alan McClennen departed after this discussion, at 8:05 PM

MBTA Presentation

Invited guest Dave Barker of the MBTA Service Planning office discussed the T's process for service planning, as being in three timeframes

- Short-term. An example is a small change to headway on a bus route. The timeframe is about 6 months.
- Long-term. An example is building a new subway line. Initiatives of this scale generally come from outside the T, for example, from the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- Medium-term. An example is a new bus route. The T has a biannual service planning review process. They are starting the current cycle now. Typically, a proposed change is first vetted internally, and is then presented at a series of public meeting. Timeframe is a few years.

The T does have a set of service standards for bus routes, and Dave noted that given the fixed budget, additions to bus service in one place must be balanced by subtractions elsewhere.

Concerns noted by TAC members included the following:

- Bus service reliability and schedule adherence (Bus bunching is a frequent occurrence on the 77.)
- Real-time information for bus passengers
- Bus stop shelters

- Improved weekend service
- Congestion near Alewife (would an HOV lane improve bus service reliability in the evening?)
- Expanding park-and-ride at Alewife and other locations
- Commuter parking on residential streets near subway stations

Elisabeth Carr-Jones praised the new bus route signage.

MBTA plans that may address schedule adherence/reliability include the following:

- New radio systems and automatic vehicle location (AVL) on some buses. This opens up options for improved bus schedule control, and real-time schedule displays.
- Replacing the current RTS buses, with low floor / low emission buses
- New fare system may speed fare collection

In most towns, the MBTA places bus stop shelters. However, in Boston (where there is plenty of foot traffic to read the ads), the shelters are funded privately, via advertising revenue.

We briefly discussed transportation projects in town and their possible impact on MBTA service:

- Summer Street reconstruction is now planned for Summer 2003. No MBTA impact.
- Symmes Hospital may have some impact our Route 67 ridership. The timeline is several years, and we don't know the impact until we know what will be built.
- Ideas for the Mass Ave. corridor that may have some impact include (a) adding crosswalks to bus stops that don't have them, (b) making the stop at Lake and Mass. Ave. a far side stop, and (c) one wide travel lane in each direction. There are no current plans to move bus stops.

Dave Barker noted that midday ridership was a good predictor of weekend ridership; however, Larry Englisher pointed out that this misses the schoolchildren and their parents who might use the bus on weekends.

Elisabeth Carr-Jones noted that a number of transit-related suggestions were made during the Assessment Study. These should be sent to the MBTA.

Specific concerns raised by Dave Barker include the following:

- Temporarily eliminating the Route 67 diversion to Symmes Hospital. With the current low level of activity at that site, there are extremely few boardings/alightings at that stop.
- Putting an on-street bus stop for the route 62 at Arlington Heights. David Walkinshaw raised the concern that this could eliminate some much-needed parking spaces. Lt McHugh suggested that by moving the two-space cabstand onto MBTA property, a bus stop could be added by using the former cabstand space and only one additional parking space.

This discussion ended at approximately 9:10 PM.

Jason / Brantwood

David Walkinshaw reported that since the last meeting the only consensus is on (a) the planned changes at Spring, which have been well received, (b) increased enforcement, and (c) maybe a yield sign at Jason / Hillsdale. There is concern about increased noise with a raised crossing at Jason/Brantwood. Given the absence of crashes at Jason/Hillsdale, we agreed that no action was needed on the yield sign.

For a possible public meeting, we voted unanimously that David Walkinshaw and Ed Starr would draft a letter to both the neighborhood and the Selectmen with the following points:

- We should wait on any public meeting until several months after the Jason/Spring changes have been implemented.
- Thus far, there is no neighborhood consensus that significant changes should be made to the Jason / Hillsdale / Brantwood intersection.
- For actions that might significantly affect traffic volumes, it is important that other neighborhood be included in the process, including Pleasant Street and Highland Avenue.

For the Jason/Spring intersection, Rich Bento reported that DPW is developing a plan to slightly modify the geometry, and plans to test it with cones, a school bus and a garbage truck. Neighbors will also be invited to the test.

Russell Street update

Rich Bento reported that a walkway along the Court Street extension will be delineated using some curbing and stone dust. It will be approximately 4' feet wide. Bollards will be added to the Winslow/Russell Terrace intersection.

After some discussion about the alternate side parking recommendation for Russell Street, we agreed that DPW should draw up a plan detailed enough to assess the number of parking spaces that will be lost as well as any visibility issues.

Speed Bump Liability

Ed Starr distributed a letter from John Maher that outlined his liability concerns from speed bump usage.

Speed Humps

Rich Bento handed out materials on traffic calming and speed humps. The approximate price for a 24' wide portable (rubber) speed hump with a 22' cross section is \$7,500. Salt Lake City has been experimenting with moving them around. Next steps are to talk with references from the vendor, conduct some experiments, and then consider a specific proposal to the Selectmen.

Town Transportation News

The police have received a request from Leader Bank for a crosswalk at Mass Ave. and Trowbridge, in East Arlington. Lt. McHugh reported that his recommendation is to fold this request into the Mass. Ave. Corridor process, and not take action at this time. He also reported that the measurement program was slightly ahead of schedule, with the counters now at Orvis Road and Warren Street.

Rich Bento reported on an innovative Dutch product for in-pavement marking that is widely used in Europe. Cost is about \$3,500 (far less than other in-pavement marking systems).

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Handouts:

Agenda – from Ed Starr

Minutes from September 18, 2002 – from Scott Smith

Letters re: Pleasant Street – from Board of Selectmen via Ed Starr

List of TAC priorities – from Ed Starr

Letter on Speed Bumps – from John Maher via Ed Starr

Traffic Calming Alternatives handout – from Rich Bento